

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 EUR-08 SCA-01 CIAE-00

INR-05 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00 JUSE-00 SEC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8418

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: GOCR EXONERATES VESCO ON ARMS ISSUE

REF: SAN JOSE 4032

1. OCTOBER 24 PRESS CARRIES TEXT OF MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY MARIO CHARPENTIER'S REPORT OF INVESTIGATION TO PRESIDENT ODUBER ABOUT ALLEGATIONS THAT CAME OUT OF SENATORS JACKSON'S COMMITTEE THAT ROBERT VESCO HAD ILLEGALLY BROUGHT ARMS INTO COSTA RICA. THE FIVE-PAGE REPORT CONCLUDES, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, BY STATING THAT "NO EVIDENCE HAS BEEN FOUND THAT ATTRIBUTES TO MR. ROBERT VESCO THE ALLEGED ACTS TO MR. ROBERT VESCO."

2. THE INVESTIGATION REPORT DISCUSSES FIRST THE U.S. SOURCE OF THE ALLEGATIONS AND THE IMPACT ON SENSIBILITIES IN COSTA RICA AS THE REASON FOR THE INVESTIGATION. THE REPORT NOTED
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THAT VESCO HAS BEEN ON NOTICE SINCE MAY THAT HE

MUST NOT OPERATE OUTSIDE THE COSTA RICAN LAW. IT ALSO NOTES THAT VESCO HIMSELF HAD REQUESTED AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHARGES.

3. THE BODY OF THE REPORT DEALS PRIMARILY WITH THE PURCHASE BY THOMAS P. RICHARDSON OF ARMS IN LOS ANGELES IN APRIL 1974. THE ARMS PURCHASED WERE SATISFACTORILY PROVED TO NOT HAVE LEFT LOS ANGELES AND COULD NOT BE PROVED, THE REPORT NOTES, TO HAVE BEEN BOUGHT FOR VESCO. THE REPORT SAID THE INVESTIGATORS WERE UNABLE TO ESTABLISH IF VESCO HAD ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL BY STUART GREYDON, A BUSINESSMAN FROM MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, TO SET UP A MACHINE GUN FACTORY IN COSTA RICA. THE ONLY PART OF THE REPORT THAT IS SLIGHTLY CRITICAL DEALS WITH THE LANDING OF THE AIRCRAFT N33TR AT JUAN SANTAMARIA AIRPORT ON APRIL 19, 1974. THE REPORT STATES THAT DESPITE THE AIRPORT HAVING BEEN TEMPORARILY CLOSED FOR REPAIRS AT THAT TIME, RICHARDSON'S PILOT FRAUDULENTLY PLEADED FUEL SHORTAGE AND A SICK PERSON ON THE AIRPLANE AS EMERGENCY REASONS FOR LANDING. ONCE ON THE GROUND, THE REPORT WENT ON, IT WAS FOUND THE AIRCRAFT HAD FUEL ENOUGH FOR ANOTHER ONE HOUR AND TWENTY MINUTES, AND THAT THERE WERE NOT SICK PEOPLE--ONLY DRUNK ONES--ON BOARD. IT SAID NO ARMS WERE ON THE PLANE.

4. COMMENT: THE INVESTIGATION REPORT IS OBVIOUSLY BASED LARGELY ON WHAT VESCO HIMSELF PRESENTED TO THE MINISTER, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE MINISTER ALSO CHECKED APPROPRIATE AIRPORT AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING CUSTOMS, IN HIS INVESTIGATIVE EFFORT. THE CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH COMES AS NO SURPRISE, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE PATENTLY TRANSPARENT PUBLICITY BUILD-UP GIVEN TO THE VESCO INTERVIEW WITH CHARPENTIER.

5. ALTHOUGH NO EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS YET APPEARED, "LA REPUBLICA'S" DO-RE-MI COLUMN, ANTICIPATING TWO DAYS AGO VESCO'S ABSOLUTION, AGAIN STRUCK OUT AT VESCO BY CALLING FOR THE CONSEJO DE GOBIERNO TO LOOK NOT ONLY AT THIS (ARMS) ACCUSATION IN MAKING A DETERMINATION ABOUT VESCO'S DESIRABILITY IN COSTA RICA. (THE CONSEJO DE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOBIERNO IS SUPPOSED TO ACT SHORTLY ON THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY'S REPORT.)

6. THE "LA REPUBLICA" COLUMN, FAITHFULLY REFLECTING ITS VIGOROUS ANTI-VESCO EDITORIAL POSTURE, GOES ON TO NOTE THE DEEPLY DISTURBING IMPACT VESCO'S PRESENCE HAS HAD ON THE COSTA RICAN SOCIETY AND CALLS FOR HIS REMOVAL BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO BE THE

POSITION OF "LA NACION" IN A DAY OR TWO.

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